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**O´Neill Worldwide: The First and the Last (so far) Performance in Slovakia**

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There is an interesting trend in Slovakia. If a theatre wants to divorce itself from low and commercial genres and establish itself as an artistic institution that is able to perform a high-quality intellectual play, they often perform a play by Eugene O´Neill.

That is the case of the first performance and last of O´Neill´s plays in Slovakia. The first play ever performed in Slovakia (Czechoslovakia in those days) was one-act play *In the Zone* (premiere in 1934 in Martin; directed by F. Hoffmann). The circumstances of its selection and premiere reflect the uneasy atmosphere of post-first-world war and pre-second-world war times. The play was premièred in Martin, the cultural centre of those-days Slovakia, in a building called “The House“ (for political reasons and tight ties with pro-Hungarian parts of the society, it could not be called by a more patriotic name “the National House“, as planned earlier). (See picture 1. Theatre of the Slovak National Uprising in Martin, formerly “The House”).



Thus the place of the first premiere of O´Neill was very symbolic for Slovak patriots. To prove that this Slovak cultural institution is not only functioning but also able to bring up new, even avant-garde topics, the director F. Hoffmann selected a play written by an internationally recognized, yet still new and in many ways “avant-garde“ author, Eugene O´Neill. He also tried to introduce O´Neill to the Slovak spectators and thus selected a play that would be well-accepted and that would answer the spectator´s interest of the period: *In the Zone* contained psychological features (reflecting modernist tendencies of the 1930´s) and also brings up a topic highly relevant in post-first-world-war world: suspicion and espionage. Needless to say, the play was very well accepted and run for two more years.

The latest performance of O’Neill’s play *Long Day´s Journey into Night* (premièred in June 6, 2011 and still running) had similar goals than the first performance of his play: this time, however, it helped to established a new generation of actors to be able to perform even more demanding and intellectually stimulating plays. Both Juraj Kemka (Jamie Tyrone) and Lukáš Latinák (Edmund) represent a younger generation of Slovak actors, known mostly for their roles in lighter genres, TV series and comedies. However, in Long Day´s Journey into Night they proved themselves to be able to perform conflicted character with mixed personalities, haunted by ghost from the past and present. For their performance, they were awarded by the “Prémia Literárneho Fondu” Awards (2010/2011). Zuzana Kronerová (Mary Tyrone) and Boris Farkaš (James Tyrone) on the other hand represent well established Slovak actors. Zuzana Kronerová superbly impersonated Mary Tyrone. She stressed the rational, melodrama-less part of her personality and translated Mary and her specific problem to the Slovak audience. For her part, Kronerová was awarded by prestigious “Cena literárneho fondu 2011” award.

Visually, the performance was interpreted symbolically; in a minimalist fashion. The concrete grey setting gave an impression of claustrophobic, narrowing space, directing attention to the very core of the Tyrones´ complex family problems.

In spite modern spectator perhaps does not blame his family for own failures as much as O´Neill´s characters did, the play *Long Day´s Journey into Night* brings up many topics relevant even in the 21st century to the spectators worldwide.

A Chronological list of Slovak performances of Eugene O´Neill´s Plays:

(1) In-between-wars performances:

1934 – *In the Zone.* Martin. Directed by: F. Hoffmann.

1937 – *Desire Under the Elms*. (*Túžba pod brestami).* Martin. Directed by: F. Hoffmann.

1938 – *Desire Under the Elms*.(*Túžba pod brestami).* Directed by: F. Hoffmann.

1940 – *Mourning Becomes Electra. (Americká Elektra).* Martin, Divadlo SNP. Directed by: F. Hoffmann[[1]](#footnote-1).

1944 – *Anna Christie.* Martin, Divadlo SNP.

(2) Performances prior to 1989 (Communist period):

1959 – *Desire Under the Elms*. (*Túžba pod brestami).* Zvolen, DJGT. Directed by: D. Janda. Première: 18. 4. 1959.

1964 – *Desire Under the Elms*. (*Túžba pod brestami).* Podbrezová, Stála ochotnícka scéna.

1966 – *Anna Christie*. Zvolen, DJGT. Directed by: M. Zéda. Première: 12. 11. 1966.

1968 – *Long Day´s Journey into Night* (*Cesta dlhého dňa do noci).* Bratislava, Malá scéna. Directed by: J. Svoboda.

1971 – *Mourning Becomes Electra. (Smútok pristane Elektre).* Bratislava, Directed by: P. Haspra.

1975 – *Marco Millions. (Miliónový Marco).* Bratislava, Činohra SND.

1981 – *Long Day´s Journey into Night* (*Cesta dlhého dňa do noci)*. Zvolen, DJGT. Directed by: A. Turčan. Première: 6. 2. 1981.

1982 – *Iceman Commeth (Ľadár prichádza).* Bratislava, Činohra SND. Directed by: P. Haspra. Première: 19. 12. 1982.

1985 – *A Moon for the Misbegotten (Mesiac pre smoliarov).* Nitra, DAB. Directed by: K. Spišák. Première: 18. 12. 1985.

1986 – *Great God Brown (Veľký boh Brown).* Bratislava, Činohra SND. 1986/87.

(3) Performances after 1989: New Age of Slovak Drama:

1989 – *Mourning Becomes Electra. Smútok pristane Elektre.* Nitra, DAB. Directed by: J. Bednárik.

1989 – *A Moon for the Misbegotten (Noc pre dvoch).* Martin, Divadlo SNP. Directed by: M. Porubjak.

1991 – *A Moon for the Misbegotten. (Mesiac pre smoliarov).* (TV play).

1995 – *Long Day´s Journey into Night* (*Cesta dlhého dňa do noci).* (A radio play). Directed by: V. Rusko st.

2000 – *Desire Under the Elms*. (*Túžba pod brestami).* Martin, Divadlo SNP. Directed by: M. Oľha. Première: 7. 4. 2000. Počet repríz: 5.

2000 – *Long Day´s Journey into Night* (*Deň do noci – rozhovory o samote z rodinného albumu).* Bratislava, Divadlo a.ha. Directed by: Š. Korenči. Première: 29. 4. 2000. Počet repríz: 6.

2004 – *Mourning Becomes Electra. (Smútok pristane Elektre).* Divadelný súbor v Dubnici nad Váhom. Directed by: T. Roháč a. h.

2011 – *Long Day´s Journey into Night* (*Cesta dlhého dňa do noci).* Bratislava, Astorka. Directed by: R. Polák. Première: 17. 6. 2011.

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1. MAŤAŠÍK, Andrej. 2013. *Slovenský expresionista a reformátor Ferdinand Hoffmann.* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)